



# BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY UPDATE

FEBRUARY 2005

## United States BSE Surveillance

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) enhanced BSE surveillance in June 2004 after diagnosing BSE in a Canadian-origin cow in Washington State in December 2003. The plan is to determine if BSE is present in U.S. cattle, and if present, at what level. A "cost-recovery" system for the movement, storage and disposal of carcasses or products is in place to aid the cattle industry during this surveillance program.

As many samples as possible are being collected over a 12 to 18 month period from "high-risk" cattle over thirty months of age that:

- Have signs consistent with BSE,
- Cannot rise or cannot walk,
- Die from unknown causes.

The estimated U.S. goal is to test 268,500 cattle. Since June 2004, over 199,000 samples have been collected from U.S. cattle and approximately 20,000 of these were collected in California. All of these samples have been negative for BSE.

## Food and Drug Actions

In July 2004, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) prohibited certain cattle-derived materials in all FDA-regulated human food and cosmetics including:

- Dietary supplements and ingredients
- Infant formula
- Canned and frozen foods
- Bakery goods, snack food, candy, and chewing gum
- Food ingredients and additives
- Cosmetics and cosmetic ingredients

This rule is consistent with the actions taken in December 2003 that prohibited these materials from human food.

Prohibited cattle materials include:

- Specified risk materials - skull, brain, eyes, vertebral column, spinal cord and associated nerve ganglia
- Small intestine of all cattle
- Material from non-ambulatory disabled cattle
- Material from cattle not passed for human consumption
- Mechanically separated beef

## Canadian BSE Surveillance

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) increased BSE surveillance in January 2004 after two cases of BSE were diagnosed in cattle originating from Alberta during 2003. The program objective is to determine the prevalence of BSE by testing "high-risk" cattle. The goal was to test a minimum of 8,000 animals in 2004 and 38,000 in subsequent years. A reimbursement plan introduced in September 2004 increased the submission rate; Canada collected 23,549 samples in 2004.

## BSE in Canada

In January 2005, BSE was confirmed in an eight-year-old dairy cow and in a seven-year-old beef cow. Both were born in Alberta. No part of these animals entered human food or animal feed. CFIA suspects these animals were infected through contaminated feed produced before or shortly after the 1997 feed ban. The investigations focus on tracing the infected cows, their offspring, and other cattle born on the same farms within a year of the infected animals.

The four cases of BSE diagnosed in Canadian-born cattle since May of 2003 have cost the industry an estimated five billion dollars. These recent cases have also raised concerns about the proposed reopening of the Canadian border.

## Minimal-Risk Regions

The USDA published a final rule on classifying regions as "minimal risk for introducing BSE into the U.S." on January 4, 2005. The rule attempts to continue to protect the U.S. from BSE while removing unnecessary restrictions on trade in ruminants, their products and byproducts.

This rule recognizes Canada as the first country to be classified as a minimal-risk region after diagnosing BSE. When this rule becomes effective on March 7, 2005, the following commodities can be imported from Canada:

- Cattle for immediate slaughter or feeding (must be less than 30 months old when slaughtered). Feeder cattle must be branded to show their origin ("C/N" will be used for Canada), individually identified with an ear tag tracing to their farm of origin, moved to feedlots in "sealed" vehicles, and cannot go to more than one feedlot. Specified risk materials must be removed at slaughter.
- Meat from cattle, and certain other products and byproducts including bovine livers, tongues, gelatin, and tallow.

Other regions that meet the minimal-risk conditions in the future will be classified through rulemaking and a risk assessment.

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